

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6637

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 03835

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, FR, SU

SUBJECT: FRENCH MINISTER'S VISIT TO SUDAN

REF: KHARTOUM 330 (NOTAL)

1. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE NEAR EAST ROUILLON, WHO ACCOMPANIED MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT GALLEY ON TRIP TO SUDAN, HAS CONFIRMED GENERAL FRENCH SATISFACTION WITH KHARTOUM VISIT DESCRIBED REFTEL. STRESSING THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE WEST'S BEING RESPONSIVE TO SUDANESE NEEDS, ROUILLON INDICATED THAT FRANCE IS PREPARED TO MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE WHITE NILE CANAL, PROVIDED THAT SAUDI FINANCING, WHICH THE SUDANESE CLAIMED IS ASSURED, BECOMES AVAILABLE.

2. ROUILLON SAID THAT THE FRENCH ARE INTERESTED IN A NUMBER OF OTHER PROJECTS IN SUDAN, BUT THAT THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF MAKING LOANS; IF SAUDI OR OTHER ARAB LARGESSE IS NOT AVAILABLE, FRENCH ACTIVITIES WILL BE LIMITED TO CULTURAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION. AS IT
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IS, THE FRENCH ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE

LARGE TANNERY WHICH THEY BUILT IN SUDAN UNDER AN EARLIER LOAN AGREEMENT. THEY FEAR, ROUILLON SAID, THAT AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF SUITABLE CATTLE SKINS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE TO KEEP THE PLANT RUNNING AT FULL STEAM WHEN IT IS SHORTLY TURNED OVER IN TOTO TO THE SUDANESE.

3. ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL, THE FRENCH WERE STRUCK BY SUDANESE INDIFFERENCE TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. ALTHOUGH, PARADOXICALLY, SOME SOUTHERN OFFICIALS CRITICIZED ISRAEL, KHARTOUM LEADERS MERELY HAD EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR CAIRO'S POSITION. OF MUCH MORE CONCERN TO THE SUDANESE WAS THE ETHIOPIAN SCENE. WITH NEIGHBORS LIKE QADAFI, AMIN AND BOKASSA, NIMEIRI HAS REASON TO WORRY ABOUT RENEWED INSTABILITY ON SUDAN'S EASTERN BORDER, ROUILLON SAID. HE ADDED THAT THE FRENCH WERE VERY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY NIMEIRI AND WISHED THEY COULD DO MORE TO HELP HIM.

4. COMMENT: ROUILLON WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GALLEY'S PERFORMANCE WITH THE SUDANESE AND SAID HE HOPES TO PRESS HIM AGAIN INTO SERVICE FOR MINISTERIAL VISITS TO THE MIDDLE EAST.
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